

**REMARKS**

Claims 1-15 are pending in the application, including claims 6-15, which were added in the Amendment filed March 26, 2004.

Claims 1-15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by previously-cited Honma et al. (US 5,774,634, hereafter "Honma"). The Examiner has repeated the previous rejection. With respect to claims 6-15, the Examiner has simply asserted that "the limitations are met by the rejections above," i.e., the rejection of claims 1-5.

Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection with the following comments.

As a preliminary matter, Applicant notes that the Examiner is again requiring that drawings be filed to illustrate the subject matter of the invention. Seven sheets of drawings (FIGS. 1-11) were filed with the application on June 9, 2000, and again with the Amendment filed March 26, 2004, thereby satisfying the drawing requirements. In light of the foregoing, it appears that the Examiner has inadvertently repeated the drawing requirement.

In the "Response to Arguments," the Examiner has not responded to any of Applicants arguments from the March 26 Amendment. Instead, the Examiner has only repeated the paragraph bridging pages 2-3 of the Office Action, except for deleting "With regard to claim 1," from the paragraph. Thus, Applicant is not persuaded by the Examiner. Applicant presents the following modified version of Applicant's previous arguments to further emphasize the differences between the claims of the present invention and Honma.

Applicant submits that Honma fails to teach or suggest that an image recording for one color is performed in such a way that unit blocks, which are adjacent to each other in a main scanning direction of the image recording, are provided with gradation characteristics in different

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matrix arrangements by switching a front portion and a rear portion, which are divided at an intermediate position in a sub-scanning direction, as recited by claim 1. The Examiner asserts that col. 6, lines 6-29, of Honma disclose these features of the claim, but Applicant disagrees. The cited excerpt describes sectioning image data into blocks each of which is composed of 8x8 pixels (one pixel has 256 gradations) by a block formation circuit. The image data sectioned into the blocks is encoded after it has been subjected to a compression process. Then, the encoded data is stored in a gradation memory. The excerpt further describes that line picture data stored in a resolution memory is sectioned into blocks each of which is composed of 8x8 pixels (one pixel has 1 gradation). Also, image data stored in the gradation memory is decoded by a decoding circuit, before the line picture data and the image data are synthesized by an image synthetic circuit. However, the reference is silent regarding the specifically-recited feature of adjacent unit blocks being provided with gradation characteristics in different matrix arrangements by switching a front portion and a rear portion which are divided at an intermediate position in a sub-scanning direction, as recited by claim 1. Therefore, claim 1 is not anticipated by Honma, for at least this reason.

Claims 2, 6, 8, and 10 are not anticipated by Honma, at least because of their dependence from claim 1.

With respect to claim 3, Applicant submits that claim 3 is not anticipated by Honma for reasons analogous to those presented above in relation to claim 1.

Also, Honma fails to teach or suggest that unit blocks are shifted by one half of one block of the matrix in the main scanning direction. The portion of the reference cited by the Examiner

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(col. 5, line 59 – col.6, line 15), which is the same portion cited in the rejection of claim 1, simply does not teach or suggest this feature of claim 3.

Furthermore, Honma does not teach or suggest adjacent unit blocks being provided with gradation characteristics in different matrix arrangements by switching a second front portion and a second rear portion which are divided at an intermediate position in a main scanning direction in the matrix, as recited in claim 3. The cited excerpt of the reference does not disclose anything about switching portions.

Therefore, claim 3 is not anticipated by Honma for these reasons.

Regarding claims 4, 5, 7, 9 and 11, these claims are allowable over the prior art, at least because of their dependence from claim 3.

With further regard to claims 2 and 4, Applicant submits that the cited excerpt of Honma does not disclose or suggest that each dot in the unit blocks is recorded at a size corresponding to a given gradation. The cited portion of the reference does not indicate any particular feature of dots in a unit block. In fact, dots are not mentioned at all. Thus, claims 2 and 4 are allowable over the prior art for this additional reason.

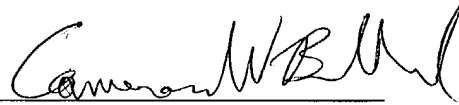
Claims 12-15 are allowable for reasons analogous to those for claim 1.

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

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The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



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